

# THE MILITANT

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SPECIAL  
SUPPLEMENT

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## Auto strikers force GM to postpone showdown with UAW

BY JEAN LUC DUVAL  
AND JOHN SARGE

FLINT, Michigan — United Auto Workers (UAW) members voted July 29 to approve an agreement with General Motors (GM) to settle two local strikes here. Workers at GM's Flint Metal Fabrication Center voted by a 90 percent majority to accept the deal, while across town workers at the Delphi East Plant reportedly approved it with 76 percent in favor.

"The showdown was deferred, not resolved," read one headline in the *Detroit Free Press*. Since 1995 the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News* have waged an attack on the unions there.

The strike lasted 54 days at the Metal Fabrication Center and 48 days at Delphi East, idling nearly 200,000 workers and costing the company more than \$2 billion in lost production. But the settlement leaves

the central issue in the fight — GM's drive to slash its payroll and impose major productivity increases — unresolved. The *Wall Street Journal* article reporting the tentative agreement pointed out that the company remains "determined to make GM's manufacturing leaner and more competitive, ultimately employing 50,000 fewer hourly workers than today."

"It wouldn't be too strong to call it [the settlement] a disaster," Burnham Securities analyst David Healy told the press. "The aim would be for GM to get its costs down to levels competitive with Ford and Chrysler, whether you count it as hours per car or stamping hits per worker. I can't find anything worth \$2.2 billion that GM got out of the strike."

"It's a good agreement," explained Floyd Richardson of UAW Local

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After a 54-day strike that cost GM some \$2.2 billion, the auto giant agreed to a settlement that resolves nothing. Above, striker at Flint Metal Fabrication Center celebrates.



Militant/José Aravena

Some 450 people participated in July 11-12 active workers conference in Pittsburgh

## 'Free Puerto Rico! Release the prisoners!'

Rally marks 100 years since U.S. invasion

BY HILDA CUZCO  
AND LUIS MADRID

GUÁNICA, Puerto Rico — In a field of Puerto Rican flags, tens of thousands of independence supporters marched and rallied in this southern town July 25 commemorating the centennial of the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico.

Coming from all corners of this Caribbean island, the crowd marched down the July 25 Avenue led by 100 youth each carrying a Puerto Rican flag, which symbolized 100 years since the U.S. takeover.

Held at the very site of the bay where U.S. troops landed on that date in 1898, the event was the first time in years that the annual commemoration was a joint action by all pro-independence forces on the island. The main organizations involved were the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and the Hostos National Congress. Many pro-independence demonstrators were not affiliated to any organization. Guánica and the highway leading to it became one giant traffic jam as marchers poured in for what PIP leaders said was the largest demonstration of this kind in Puerto Rico.

Chants of "Viva Puerto Rico Libre!"

(Long live free Puerto Rico) were heard throughout the rally. Marchers brought banners and T-shirts with slogans such as "Puerto Rico for the Puerto Ricans" and "No more colony." Many carried signs calling for the release of the 15 *independentista* political prisoners in U.S. jails. Others protested against the policies of Gov. Pedro Rosselló and his pro-statehood party, the New Progressive Party (PNP).

Among the featured speakers were Rafael Cancel Miranda and Lolita Lebrón, who along with two other independence fighters spent a quarter century in U.S. jails after carrying out an armed protest in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1954. They received some of the loudest applause and cheers from the audience.

Cancel Miranda highlighted the campaign to free the 15 political prisoners. "If one of us is in prison, we are all in prison," he said to a thunderous ovation. Cancel Miranda read a letter he had sent to Ida Luz Rodríguez, one of the 15 who is serving a 75-year sentence in Dublin, California, that is due to end in 2014.

"They ask me if it was worth spending

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## Active workers conference registers gains in socialists' union and branch work

BY NAOMI CRAINE  
AND NORTON SANDLER

PITTSBURGH — Some 450 people participated in an Active Workers Conference here July 11-12, including trade unionists, activists in the fight for Puerto Rican independence, Young Socialists, and supporters of the communist movement involved in helping Pathfinder Press keep its books and pamphlets in print by putting them in digital form.

The purpose of the conference was to "draw together our experiences of the last few weeks — participating in the fight by

auto workers against General Motors, the general strike in Puerto Rico and fight for Puerto Rican independence, as well as other struggles of working people — and use these to strengthen and deepen the party's work," said Mike Fitzsimmons, organizer of the Socialist Workers Party branch in Cleveland, in welcoming participants to the conference. Joining him in the welcome was Diana Newberry, the SWP branch organizer from Pittsburgh.

The conference was hosted by the Pittsburgh and Cleveland SWP branches, the

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Militant/Megan Arney

About 2,000 people marched in New York demanding Puerto Rican independence and freedom for 15 political prisoners July 25. See coverage on page 3.



# 'Independence for Puerto Rico, now!'

**Continued from front page**  
28 years in prison. But looking at you here standing up, I'm willing to do it for another 100 years," the independentista leader said. The crowd burst into cheers, clapping and waving flags.

Lebrón recalled how in 1954 she, together with Candel Miranda, Andrés Figueroa Cordero, and Irving Flores had "planted the seed of patriotism with blood. If it had to be done with blood, we did it" in the effort to win independence. Looking out on the thousands who had come here from different places from around Puerto Rico, she exclaimed, "We are elated with the sea of Puerto Ricans here who have sworn to liberate Puerto Rico."

Luis Nieves Falcón, a prominent leader of the effort to release the Puerto Rican political prisoners, also spoke about this international campaign.

Rubén Berrios, president of the PIP, gave the keynote speech with a call for unity in the fight for independence. He appealed to the audience to focus on opposing the ruling party's efforts to bring about statehood.

The PIP had just held in San Juan an international Congress of Solidarity with Independence for Puerto Rico, attended by representatives of Latin American parties affiliated to the Socialist International, to which the PIP belongs. Some were present and spoke at the Guánica rally, including from Ecuador, Argentina, and Bolivia. Another speaker was Tomás Borge, a leader of the Sandinista National Liberation Front of Nicaragua. The PIP dedicated the rally to José Francisco Peña Gómez, the recently deceased social democratic leader in the Dominican Republic.

One group of youth carrying Puerto Rican flags had come from the towns of Aibonito and Barranquitas, in the central mountains, and Camuy, on the northern coast. They said they were thrilled to be at the pro-independence event. Laura Morcilio from Aibonito pointed out, "One hundred years — this is a historic date that has united all the nationalist groups. This never happened before."

Supporters of the striking telephone workers were among the marchers. Serafín Amaro, a recently graduated teacher currently working as a waiter in Mayagüez, said

from Fajardo, described some of the experiences that had made him a supporter of the independence struggle. He said even though he fought in Vietnam he did not

the one in Cuba," Morales Coll said in an interview with the *San Juan Star*.

## Colonial parties hold rallies

Across town, under the banner "100 Years of Union and Progress," the PNP held a rally of tens of thousands of its supporters to celebrate the U.S. invasion, which pro-statehood forces call the "disembarkment" or even "liberation" by U.S. troops.

Gov. Rosselló used his speech to announce that his administration would organize a plebiscite for December with or without U.S. Congress backing. "If after 100 years, the U.S. Senate does not possess the will to put an end to a century of colonialism, Puerto Rico does," Rosselló told a crowd waving Puerto Rican and U.S. flags.

One typical PNP supporter, a 65-year-old retired teacher, told the daily *El Nuevo Día*, "We believe in the union with the United States because we are unable to do anything on our own." The PNP leadership views this as a way to get around the stalling by U.S. Congress on a plebiscite proposed by Rep. Donald Young of Alaska, a measure known as the Young bill.

Meanwhile, in San Juan, supporters of the Commonwealth status for Puerto Rico drew a

crowd of tens of thousands as well. Aníbal Acevedo Vilá, president of the Popular Democratic Party, which advocates an improved version of the current "Commonwealth" status, announced in his speech that his party would probably participate in the plebiscite called by Rosselló.

The PPD rally celebrated the 46th anniversary of the island's Commonwealth status, under which the Puerto Rican government has limited powers and Puerto Ricans hold U.S. citizenship, while Washington holds the real power.



Puerto Rican flags waved above the crowd at the July 25 protest action in Guánica, Puerto Rico, celebrating the 100 years of struggle against U.S. colonial rule.

he supported the strikers in the fight against the sale of the state-owned Puerto Rico Telephone Co. "We have to save what's ours," he said. Amaro said he was also opposed to the plans by the U.S. military to install radars in Puerto Rico, an issue that sparked several protests on the island.

Judith Conde, a 30-year-old resident of Vieques, an island to the east of the main island, said she was opposed to the continuing encroachment by the U.S. Navy. Vieques, with a population of 8,000, is primarily a fishing community. "It's a beautiful place, but what I don't like is the U.S. military occupation." She said the continuous target practice by the Navy on the island is "intolerable."

A Vietnam veteran, Arcadio Cuadrado

agree with that U.S. war of aggression against the Vietnamese people. "I defended a cause that I had nothing to do with."

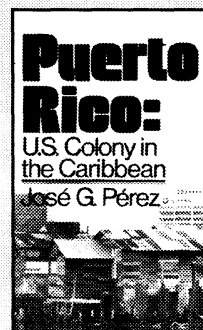
Many demonstrators commented on the importance of telling the true history of colonial oppression and the struggle against it.

Elizabeth Martínez, 38, from Ensenada, explained, "My father used to work at a sugar mill that was the biggest in the world in the 1930s. The workers who were Puerto Rican were subjected to discrimination [by the U.S. owners] and were paid paltry wages." She added, "There is a library that is close to being destroyed that keeps records of that history."

An exhibit of rate books, drawings, and photographs documenting the Spanish-Cuban-American War and the U.S. conquest of Puerto Rico was held at the Ateneo Puertorriqueño in Guánica.

Enrique Morales Coll, president of the Ateneo, noted that pro-U.S. history books claim the Puerto Rican population welcomed the invading U.S. army. "You have to understand that the populace did not have weapons because they were taken by the Spaniards to prevent a rebellion similar to

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# Rallies in U.S.: free independence fighters

BY JACK WILLEY  
AND VERÓNICA POSES

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Some 1,500 people from around the country, waving Puerto Rican flags and carrying banners and placards, marched to the White House here July 25 to protest U.S. colonial rule of this Caribbean nation and demand the release of 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners held in U.S. jails. The action was sponsored by the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners.

The date marked the 100th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico and 100 years of resistance to Washington's rule.

The biggest contingents came from New York City and Chicago. They also hailed from Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; Boston; Minneapolis; Cleveland; Buffalo, New York; Camden, New Jersey; Bridgeport, Connecticut; Orlando, Florida; and Washington, D.C. A few came from as far away as California and Denver, Colorado.

"We come here to affirm the fact that we are a nation," said Marcos Vilar, coordinator of the National Committee to free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, headquartered in Chicago.

## New to the fight for independence

A majority of demonstrators were new to the fight for Puerto Rican independence.

"I came here to support the release of all political prisoners and to learn about the fight for the rights of Puerto Ricans," said Lola Bloom, from Philadelphia. "I go to Antioch College and learned about the protest during a week of activities there in support of the political prisoners."

Daniel Velez, a high school student who joined a contingent of five busloads from Chicago, said the main reason he came was to demand the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners. "They should be released. They were doing what they were supposed to be doing, fighting for their country."

Many people said they were inspired by the month-long strike by workers at the Puerto Rican Telephone Co. against government moves to sell it off to GTE. "The telephone company is ours," commented Américo Román, a retired member of the water and sanitation workers union in Puerto Rico, now living in Orlando, Florida.

Guido Barletta, from the United Front for the Defense of the Lajas Valley, a group fighting to stop the construction of a U.S. military radar system on the island of Vieques and in Lajas, Puerto Rico, came to the march during his vacation.

A few Cuban, South African, and Mexican flags could be seen. Adolfo Bautista, a 26-year-old originally from Mexico, came to the march from Chicago because the Puerto Rican struggle is "testimony of Latinos fighting for their liberation."

Not all the demonstrators were advocates of independence. María Ortiz, sporting a "Puerto Rico no se vende" (Puerto Rico is not for sale) shirt, drove to the march from New York. "I came down here because I am Puerto Rican. I support the current Commonwealth status, but I am 100 percent against the sale of the Puerto Rican Telephone Company. We built this company and it belongs to us. [Gov. Pedro] Rosselló is selling our nation piece by piece."

On July 24 many activists held an all-night vigil in support of the Puerto Rican political prisoners. On July 25 the day's activities began with an ecumenical service and rally at the National City Christian Church. The demonstrators later marched several blocks to Lafayette Park in front of the White House, with chants in Spanish of "Freedom yes, Yankee No," and "Independence for Puerto Rico." The lead banner read, "500 años suprimidos, pero no extinguidos" (500 years of suppression, but not extinguished).

Others marched with banners declaring, "GTE: Puerto Rico is not for thieves," "Freedom for our patriots," "Puerto Rico is a nation," and "Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals of Chicago against colonialism."

## Campaign to release political prisoners

Many carried signs with the names of one or another of the 15 prisoners: Alejandrina Torres, Elizam Escobar, Oscar López, Alicia Rodríguez, Dylcia Pagán, Ida Luz Rodríguez, Carmen Valentín, Edwin Cortés,

Luis Rosa, Carlos Alberto Torres, Juan Segarra Palmer, Antonio Camacho, Adolfo Matos, Alberto Rodríguez, and Ricardo Jiménez. Several of these *independentistas* have been in U.S. prisons since 1980, with sentences ranging from 15 to 105 years.

José López, director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago, co-chaired the rally at Lafayette Park. The center has been targeted by an "antiterrorist" witchhunt against independence advocates by the U.S. government and big-business media. López's brother Oscar is one of the 15 political prisoners.

One of the features of the rally was the brief taped messages from several of the 15 prisoners. "Puerto Rico is for the Puerto Rican people," declared Dylcia Pagán, who vowed to keep fighting for independence despite unsuccessful efforts by the prison authorities to break the independentistas.

Several relatives of the prisoners were among the demonstrators. Among them was Josefina Rodríguez, mother of Ida Luz and Alicia Rodríguez. Ida Luz was sentenced to 83 years and Alicia to 85 years. "They have been illegally imprisoned because they were fighting to decolonize Puerto Rico. As a colony, Puerto Rico has the right to fight for its independence," she said.

Jaime Estades, one of the coordinators of the New York contingent, noted that the sentences were politically motivated. Murderers and drug traffickers often get 15-year prison terms, while the pro-independence fighters have gotten drastically longer sentences. Philadelphia city council member Angel Ortiz spoke in favor of independence. He said he would campaign for the right of Puerto Ricans living in the United States to vote in any plebiscite on the island's political status. Messages were also given by representatives of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, the Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu Jamal, MOVE, the Bruderhof Communities and other groups.

BY ELLIE GARCÍA  
AND NELS J'ANTHONY

NEW YORK — "¡Independencia para Puerto Rico!" and "What do we want? Free the prisoners! When do we want it? Now!" These two popular chants were accompanied by drum beats and horns as some 2,000 people marched through midtown Manhattan to the United Nations July 25 demanding an end to 100 years of U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico and freedom for the 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners. The event was organized by Comité Puerto Rico '98.

Participants came from across the northeastern United States, including Newark and Jersey City, New Jersey; Boston; Cleveland; Hartford and Bridgeport, Connecticut; and Philadelphia.

Lourdes García and Saulo Manuel Colón moderated the event. "This is a gathering saying we want freedom now. We want independence for Puerto Rico," declared Colón, who is also a member of the Puerto Rico Collective.

Jorge Luis Pabón, a 37-year-old construction worker who participated in the 40,000-strong street protest against the Metropolitan Transit Authority hiring nonunion contractors earlier this month, explained why he is for independence. "I was born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The government is trying to impose statehood against the will of the Puerto Rican people."

An organized contingent of more than a dozen Irish independence activists from New York and Boston marched with several large tricolor flags chanting "U.S. out of Puerto Rico! Britain out of Ireland!" Longtime Irish fighter George Harrison was part of the contingent that came from Boston. Puerto Rican activists greeted the Irish contingent with pride and hearty handshakes. Four Quebecois independence activists drove from Montreal to participate in the action. Wayne Lum of Asians for Independence for Puerto Rico helped to organize a contingent of Asian organizations under a coalition to march in rally.

A majority of those at the march and rally were young. A 23-year-old former loader at United Parcel Service, who asked that his name not be used, said he saw a flyer in Spanish Harlem and decided to come. He described how the successful strike against



Militant/Margrethe Siem

Demonstrators in Washington, D.C., carry signs with names of political prisoners.

UPS last year was the first conscious political act he had taken part in. "To me, UPS bosses are capitalism in its most naked existence," he said. "I was treated as a machine." Juan Vargas was part of a delegation of workers who are fighting to be represented by Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union at Angelo's and Max's Restaurant in Manhattan. Vargas said, "We are fighting against the company for the right to organize. We are asking for benefits, medical insurance, sick days, and raises."

The New York City administration mobilized more than 200 cops who lined both sides of the march at some points.

Moderators Colón and García introduced a number of organizations and individuals who gave greetings. A Leonard Peltier Defense Committee representative read a message from the jailed Native American activist. "I would like to offer support and recognition of the Puerto Rican struggle for independence the past 100 years," Peltier wrote, and "give my support to the brothers and sisters who have stood on the front line of the struggle and who are currently political prisoners and prisoners of war in the United States."

Luis Miranda got loud cheers as he brought the Cuban revolution and its importance into the action. Miranda is the director of Casa de las Américas. "The invasion of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines was genocidal.... With the victory of the Cuban revolution, Cuba made a promise to fight for the independence of Puerto Rico." That evening, some demonstrators went to Casa de las Américas for a dance celebrating the anniversary of the opening of the struggle to overthrow the Batista dictatorship in Cuba on July 26, 1953.

Andy Terranova, who helped organize the Irish contingent, read a solidarity message from longtime Irish activist Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey. Other speakers included Rev. Juan Vera, a well-known *independentista* who traveled from Puerto Rico; Frank Velgara, national coordinator of Comité Puerto Rico '98; Pam Africa from MOVE organization in Philadelphia; Minister Mohammed Abdullah of the Nation of Islam; a member of the All Mighty Latin Kings and Queens; Teresa Gutierrez from

Workers World Party; Gilberto Díaz of Latinos for Social Change in Boston; and Rev. Felix Carrion of the United Church of Christ in Cleveland.

Esperanza Marcel of Pro-Libertad read the names of the 15 independentistas held prisoner in the United States. She read a message from Puerto Rican political prisoner Alberto Rodríguez, locked up in Beaumont, Texas. "Today our people are taking a stance: Puerto Rico is not for sale," he wrote. "We will never be the 51st state."

More than 1,000 people at the march and rally signed a petition calling for the release of the prisoners.

BY LARRY LANE  
AND JACOB PERASSO

SAN FRANCISCO — Some 400 people marched and rallied at the United Nations Plaza here July 25 for Puerto Rican independence. This was the first march on the West Coast in many years calling for Puerto Rican independence and the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners being held in U.S. jails. The march and rally were sponsored by the Comité '98, an umbrella group of some 20 organizations.

One of the leading groups in the coalition was the University of California at Berkeley-based ABC (Acción Boricua y Caribeña). The day before the march, ABC had been part of a picket of nearly 100 people at the Federal Building in Oakland where the names and biographies of the 15 Puerto Rican prisoners were read.

At the rally, ABC member and Comité '98 leader Julio Camarota spoke of his experience in being part of the Comité. Also speaking at the rally were longtime Puerto Rican activists Jackie Santos, ABC leader Kahlil Jacobs-Fantauzzi and John Fogarty, vice president for Human Rights of the Irish American Unity Conference. Another group taking part in the action was the Berkeley-based League of Filipino Students.

Along the march route security was provided by a group of Chicano and Mexican American youth in brightly colored tee shirts called VOS (Voices of Struggle). This group was instrumental in organizing a walk out of hundreds of San Francisco Bay-area high school students against education cuts earlier in the year.

## — YS AROUND THE WORLD — Stockholm rally: free Puerto Rico!

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists (YS), an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS write to: Young Socialists, 1573 N. Milwaukee, P.O. Box 478, Chicago, IL. 60622. Tel: (773) 772-0551. Compuserve: 105162,605

BY DANIEL AHL

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — A small but lively demonstration of 13 people gathered here July 25 outside the U.S. embassy to denounce the continuing occupation of Puerto Rico, and celebrate the centennial anniversary of resistance against the colonial rule of Washington. YS member Maxi Ortiz spoke on the situation in the world's largest remaining colony today, pointing to the increasing resistance within the working class and the growing movement for independence and national dignity.

Participants chanted, "Troops out!" and

"Release the prisoners!" pointing to the 15 freedom fighters currently held in U.S. prisons, as well as "Puerto Rico no se vende!" (Puerto Rico is not for sale) and "Independence for Puerto Rico!" outside the embassy fences. A leaflet from the Young Socialists was handed out to people passing by, demanding withdrawal of troops and political cop agencies, freedom for Antonio Camacho and the other political prisoners, and national independence for Puerto Rico.

One young woman bought a subscription to the *Militant*, and another supporter bought the pamphlet *Puerto Rico: U.S. Colony in the Caribbean* by José G. Pérez. Afterward YS members participated in a celebration of the 45th anniversary of the July 26 movement in Cuba, promoting an upcoming tour by Olga Díaz Ramos, a leader of the Union of Young Communists of Cuba, here in November.

Daniel Ahl is a member of the Young Socialists in Stockholm.



# Active workers conference registers socialists' gains in union and branch work

## Continued from front page

Pittsburgh Young Socialists, the YS National Committee, and the steering committees elected to lead the work of socialists in seven industrial unions. In addition to workers and youth from across the United States, participants came from Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Final preparations for the conference, and for the conference panel of active workers, were discussed and organized at a two-day meeting in Pittsburgh June 27-28. SWP national secretary Jack Barnes and members of the SWP's Trade Union Committee (TUC) participated in the first day of that meeting. The second day the TUC members met jointly for several hours of discussion with the steering committee organizing the conference.

The program of the July 11-12 gathering itself featured an opening talk by Verónica Poses, organizer of the Young Socialist National Executive Committee, on the fight for Puerto Rican independence; two panels with presentations by workers involved in the class struggle; and a talk and conference summary by Barnes.

## Puerto Rican independence struggle

Poses, who spoke on "Puerto Rico: New rise of independence struggle as world imperialism weakens," had just returned from a *Militant* reporting trip to Puerto Rico along with *Perspectiva Mundial* editor Martín Koppel. She described the convergence of nationalist struggle and working-class resistance evident in the telephone workers' strike against the sale of the state-owned phone company to a consortium headed by the U.S.-based company GTE.

"The Socialist Workers Party has always put the struggle for Puerto Rican independence at the center of the fight for the socialist revolution in the United States," Poses said. "We try to politically educate our class that the working class in this country will never be free so long as Puerto Rico is enslaved." This was codified in the declaration of principles adopted by the SWP at its 1938 founding convention. The party drew on the continuity of the communist movement's support for struggles against colonial oppression, going back to the work by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the last century in support of the Irish freedom struggle and of rising national liberation struggles by the Communist International in the time of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin.

As one example of the impact of the Puerto Rican struggle on workers in the United States, Poses described the experiences of Ed Shaw, who was a longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party. As a young maritime worker during World War II, Shaw missed his ship and spent two months in Puerto Rico, where he participated in support work for a longshore strike in the port of Ponce. It was one of the experiences that led to him joining the SWP a short time later.

Olga Rodríguez, an airline worker from New York, noted in the discussion how the increase in labor resistance opens the door to discussions with more U.S.-born workers on the fight for Puerto Rican independence. "On the first day of the general strike [in Puerto Rico July 7], a co-worker who I

didn't think of as progressive told me, 'We have to do something like that here!'"

The presentation and discussion highlighted some of the concrete activities socialists are participating in with others today, including building the July 25 demonstrations calling for Puerto Rican independence and the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners, and preparing for the hearings on Puerto Rico before the UN decolonization committee August 10-12.

Among the participants in the discussion was Nivea Carballo of the Orlando, Florida, chapter of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political

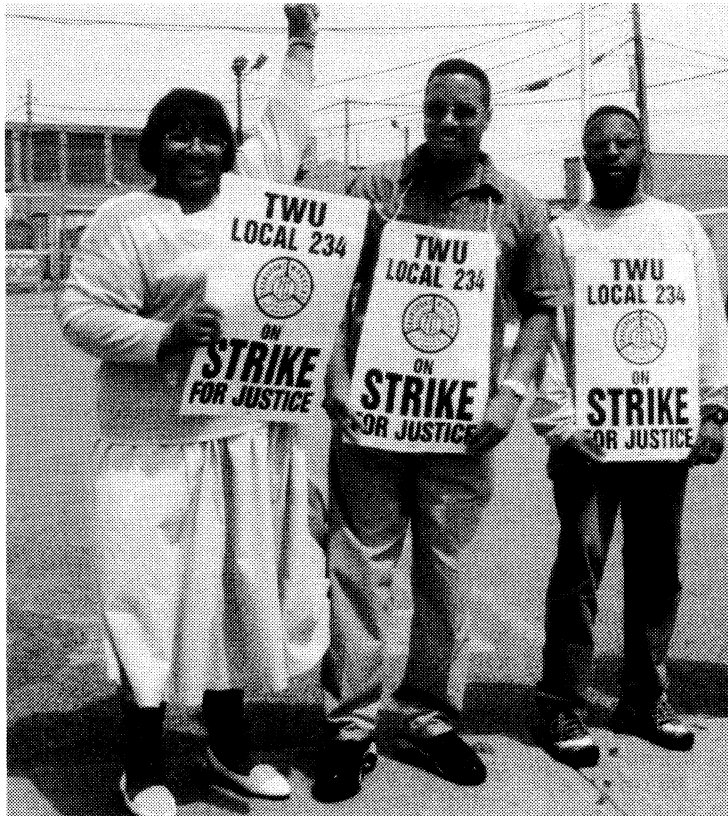
leadership bodies.

That retreat has now ended, Barnes said. For the first time in the United States since the period from the middle of World War II through the postwar labor upsurge, workers are coming into action ahead of student youth. The shift is also reflected in the increasing numbers of supporters of the communist movement who are coming toward the party and offering to take on more responsibility. And a few veterans are rejoining the party.

Fitzsimmons described the impact on the Cleveland SWP branch of several months of consistent efforts by workers in the branch

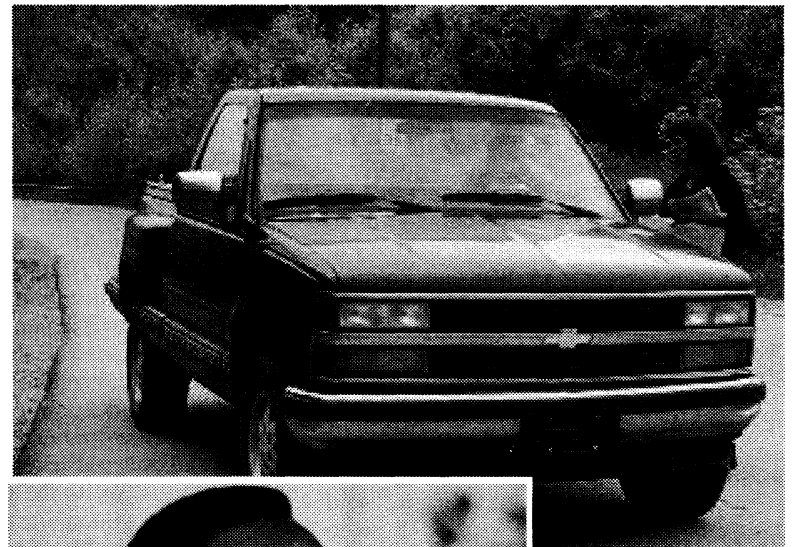
Moriarity described how she joined in building and working on preparations for the conference, including helping make the banner and selling raffle tickets on the job. During the CEP conference itself she discussed a broad range of questions with miners and others present, from the fight to get women into the mines to issues of health and safety to the GM strike and the Cuban revolution. In the course of these discussions, several people subscribed to the *Militant*.

Newberry described the results in the Pittsburgh branch of renewing the consistent weekly selling of the *Militant* at mine portals in western Pennsylvania. Socialist

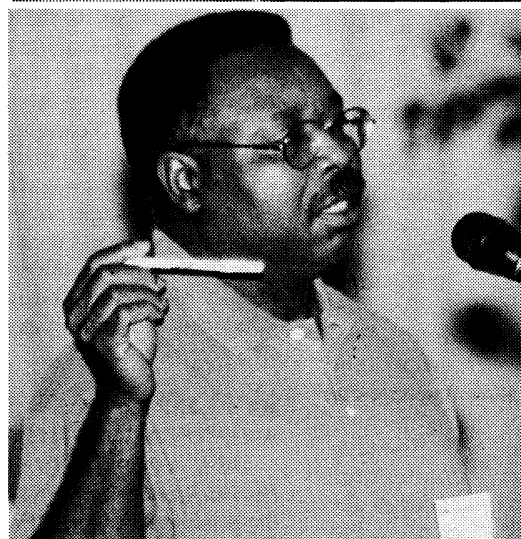


Militant/Margrethe Siem

**Socialist workers at active workers conference drew together experiences of participating in struggles, in order to adjust and strengthen the political work of SWP branches and union fractions. Above, Philadelphia transit workers picket during June 1-July 10 strike against SEPTA. Top right, selling the *Militant* at mine portal in West Virginia. Lower right, Shelton McCrainey describes discussions with co-workers in Chicago after racist killing in Jasper, Texas.**



Militant photos by Katy Karlin (top), José Aravena (left)



workers are learning about activities where mine workers are fighting to get black lung benefits reinstated, as well as other resistance to the unrelenting offensive by the coal bosses. The teams are also learning about potential hiring in the mines.

Prisoners. Two young Puerto Rican activists who participated in the gathering decided to join the Young Socialists.

## The party and mass work

At the heart of the conference were two panels of worker-bolsheviks addressing the theme, "Structuring party branches and union fractions through mass work." Panelists on the first day included Peggy Brundy, a member of the steering committee of the project to put Pathfinder books in digital form; Mike Fitzsimmons, a member of the SWP Trade Union Committee; Doug Jenness, a member of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) in Minnesota and organizer of the party's Trade Union Committee; Cecelia Moriarity, organizer of the Coal Committee recently established to organize the SWP's work among miners; Diana Newberry, a member of the Young Socialists and the Coal Committee; Bernie Senter, who organizes the leadership committee of Pathfinder's print shop; and Gaetan Whiston, organizer of the steering committee of party members in the USWA.

The panelists pointed to concrete examples of how participating in working-class struggles through mass work can restore political content to party structures that had sometimes become simply forms during the retreat of the labor movement. In his talk Saturday evening, Barnes traced this retreat to the opening of the 1990s. Participating in the Eastern Airlines strike and other labor battles around that time, and campaigning against Washington's war in Iraq, had strengthened the party's structures, particularly the trade union fractions. But during the seven-year upturn in the U.S. business cycle that followed the slaughter in Iraq, the retreat of the labor movement resumed, taking a toll on the habits of discipline and timely political response by the party's branches, union fractions, and

to reach out to other workers in that area. The branch regularized its weekly sales at factory gates in the area, as well as in working-class neighborhoods, and turned to a small strike by Steelworkers at MSI in Marietta, Ohio. The strikers, now in their 17th month of battle, have adopted the slogan "One day longer" than the boss, and their fight has become a rallying point for workers throughout the region who want to resist the employers' attacks.

"At first we were buzzing with excitement that we were selling lots of papers at the plant gates," Fitzsimmons said. "It's still exciting to sell 10, 20, or 30 papers," he continued, "but now we're discussing more what it means and how to adjust our priorities each week to deepen our collaboration with other fighters."

Gaetan Whiston described similar experiences in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Since May workers at Northwest and other airlines have bought nearly 200 copies of the *Militant* as a result of work done by the fraction of socialist workers at the airport and regular sales teams there. "Now we're posed with the challenge of developing relations with these fighting workers that go beyond a one-hour sale," Whiston said.

## Union and political activity

Several panelists stressed that the point is not simply to do sales and propaganda work, but to participate as fellow workers in struggles and in union and political activity with other unionists and working people. In the course of such work, fighters will become interested in buying and reading socialist literature.

Cecelia Moriarity, a former coal miner who is currently a member of the USWA in Pittsburgh, reported on the 20th conference of the Coal Employment Project (CEP), which took place June 26-28. The CEP began as support teams to help women get jobs in the mines and stay there.

were those involved in transforming the production of Pathfinder books to cut costs, increase labor productivity, and reduce the size of the print shop. "Two days ago the reprint of *Sexism and Science* was completed by comrades in the print shop," reported Bernie Senter. This was the second book totally prepared in digital form by an international team of volunteers, eliminating the need for traditional prepress work. The book is now stored on CD-ROM "and can be put back on press within hours as needed," Senter explained.

The night before *Sexism and Science* was finished "we announced that nine comrades are being released from the print shop to get jobs in industry," most of them in their current branches in New York and Newark. In addition, three worker-bolsheviks who had been in the print shop are on their way to cities where there are big opportunities in the class struggle today — two of them to San Francisco, one to Detroit.

These gains were made before any new equipment had been brought into the print shop. A digital image setter, which can produce one piece of film per printing plate, was delivered July 21. This is the first piece of equipment on the road to an entire computer-to-plate system that will eliminate more labor time and allow an even smaller shop staff.

This transformation is only possible through the efforts of some 140 supporters (and growing) of the communist movement who have volunteered to put in digital form every piece of every Pathfinder book and pamphlet — from the text to covers, graphics, and photos. "Everything that supporters have done is possible because of the class struggle and how the party is responding to it," said Peggy Brundy, a member of the steering committee organizing this project in the San Francisco Bay Area. "We want to keep the books in print and free up party members to talk to workers."

## Contribute to Capital Fund to help transform Pathfinder production

More than \$235,000 has been pledged so far to the capital fund launched at the active workers conference. Further contributions will help buy the computer-to-plate system and complete payments on the presses that make possible short runs, high quality, and minimal inventory costs for the production of revolutionary literature.

Those who would like to contribute to the fund can write to Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.



More than \$235,000 was pledged to a capital fund launched at the conference. This covered the cost of the new digital image setter, as well as long-needed work now under way to repair the exterior of the Pathfinder building. The response to the appeal shows the potential to raise the \$400,000 cost to buy and install the computer-to-plate system. Anything above that will make it possible to pay down the outstanding debt on the shop's presses, eliminating the lien held by the finance company. Contributions to the fund come from contract bonuses, bequests, trusts, and other special windfalls.

#### 'Assets revert to rightful owners'

The Saturday evening presentation by SWP national secretary Jack Barnes on "Sea change in working-class politics" pointed to the underlying causes of the acceleration in struggles by workers and opportunities for communists that the panelists described earlier that day.

Barnes referred to a statement by Pittsburgh business baron Andrew Mellon during the worldwide crisis of capitalism in the 1930s: "In a depression, assets revert to their rightful owners." This accurately portrays the process unfolding on a world scale today. The biggest capitalists in the biggest imperialist nations are reclaiming the assets they proclaim themselves to be the rightful owners of.

A front-page headline in the June 22 *Wall Street Journal* summed it up, "Picking the Bones: As Asian Assets Dive, the Bargain Hunters Move In for the Killings." The article described how since the collapse of the Thai currency a year ago, followed by a wave of devaluations and debt and banking crises throughout the region, U.S. companies are pouncing on the economic collapse to buy out their "troubled partners" in southeast Asia for a fraction of the former price of factories, land, and financial institutions.

Only a few months ago, U.S. Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan declared the financial catastrophe in Asia to be an "important milestone" in the "seemingly inexorable trend toward market capitalism." But then the currencies plunged again.

This economic catastrophe is a milestone — in the inexorable trend of world capitalism toward social devastation, fascism, and war. And the crisis is spreading not just in the semicolonial countries of Asia, Barnes pointed out, but also in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. It is especially acute in Japan, world capitalism's second-largest economy.

Much of the debt owed by governments

and businesses in the semicolonial countries in Asia is held by Japanese capitalists, who expected these assets to return to them as the "rightful owners." Instead, Tokyo remains in the grip of a deep banking crisis, and highly leveraged assets throughout the



As the capitalist crisis driven by sharpening competition deepens in Asia, Barnes said, the rulers are not only attempting to force starvation conditions on millions of peasants and workers, but are also bumping into the obstacle of the working class. Above, Indonesian military attempts to block protest against rising food prices last March. The working class in Russia and other workers states likewise remains a huge obstacle to imperialism. At left, Russian miners block railway lines demanding back pay.

starvation conditions on millions of peasants and workers, but also bumping into the obstacle of the working class in that country as they do so.

The employing class in the United States and other imperialist countries is also bumping into such resistance by workers more and more often. As the conference was going on, the UAW strike in Flint against General Motors was still under way and most GM production throughout North America was shut down. Barnes and others described the competition-driven logic of the auto giant's course toward a showdown with the union, whether in this strike or the next. It was clear that workers in the UAW are willing to fight and, far from being beaten, are prepared for another round with GM.

#### Working class is not demoralized

Since the closing years of the 1980s, Barnes said, the Socialist Workers Party has pointed to world capitalism's course toward depression conditions signaled by the stock market crash of 1987. The party has also explained that with the crumbling of the Stalinist regimes in Europe, Washington had lost the cold war. It's one thing to discuss these elements, but another to increasingly live through their effects and see the changes in the working class in the countries where you live and work.

Most of the "left" is bemoaning what they see as a defeat with the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. But workers do not view these events as defeats and have not been demoralized by them, the SWP leader noted. In-

stead, it's clearer than ever that as capitalist rivalry and conflicts intensify, the imperialist rulers still face the challenge of confronting the toilers in Russia, eastern Germany, China, and other workers states where capitalist rule was overturned earlier in this century. This is a draining, destabilizing factor for world capitalism, not a situation that opens possibilities for capitalist expansion and stability — as they dreamed of at the opening of the 1990s.

The bourgeoisie in Germany — and the project for a strong, German-dominated European currency it intended to lead — are being dragged down by the attempt to absorb the east Germany workers state and by the massive outstanding loans Bonn has issued to Russia.

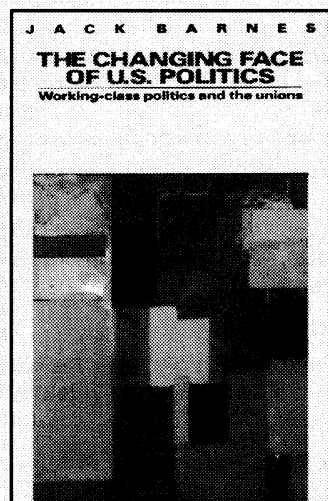
The miners in Russia, who have been striking for months now, are the terror of the International Monetary Fund, and all they are demanding is their paycheck.

The last remaining element of this picture that socialist workers have to get comfortable with today is the disappearance of "the left," Barnes said. Most of the time since 1936, the glue that held the left together — including social democrats, liberals, and petty-bourgeois radicals of many stripes — was the class collaborationist "popular front" policies of the Stalinists, dominated by the Communist Party with its ties to the state power in Moscow. With the disintegration of the Stalinist movement, that glue is now gone.

This makes politics more fluid in the workers movement and the broader milieu attracted to it. It's harder for opponents of a

Continued on Page 6

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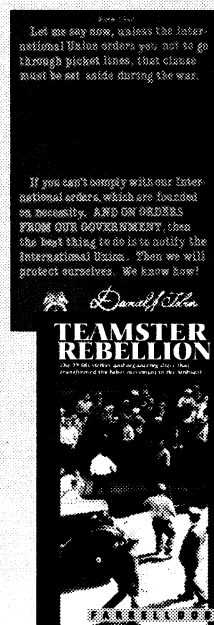
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# Active workers conference registers gains

Continued from Page 5

proletarian course to throw up factional obstacles to prevent revolutionists from working with each other, or to block off revolutionary-minded workers and youth from the communist movement.

Barnes noted that incipient fascist forces aim more of their fire at the conservatives today, and pointed to several recent commentaries by Patrick Buchanan, who remains a useful benchmark for these currents in the United States. Buchanan's July 4 column embraced Pauline Hanson, the Australian ultrarightist whose One Nation party got nearly a quarter of the vote in the Queensland state elections in June. "U.S. conservatives should take note," Buchanan wrote. "[Prime Minister John] Howard's conservative coalition could be swept from power because of a failure to accommodate a surging populism of the right."

Buchanan's two previous columns sang his frequent refrain of virulent nationalism and protection of "American workers" against "global corporations" — denouncing General Motors for "making its new Motown in Mexico," and hailing an initiative by liberal "consumer advocate" Ralph Nader demanding that companies open their stockholders meetings with the pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag.

## Second day of panel

The speakers for the panel on the second day of the active workers conference met following the discussion on Barnes's talk to adjust their presentations to advance the work done so far by participants in the gathering. Among those on the panel the second day was Danny Booher, a member of the SWP Coal Committee who recently moved to the Pittsburgh area from Chicago. Booher described the class-struggle lessons a layer of workers gained in their fight against Caterpillar Corp. They are among a layer of vanguard workers together with socialists who are trying to impart what they have learned to other unionists involved in struggles today in the Midwest.

Samantha Kern from the Young Socialists explained how the SWP and YS in San Francisco are sponsoring a summer school to study the lessons of Marxism as they participate in actions, from the coalition to build the July 25 demonstration in solidarity with the Puerto Rican freedom struggle to support for battles in the fields by members of the United Farm Workers union.

Tom Alter from the Des Moines SWP and organizer of the steering committee of party members in the United Food and Commercial Workers detailed the importance of working with fighting unionists to become knowledgeable about and to join in the struggles of working farmers. He related an experience during a trip to Australia recently where workers told him how the ruling class of that country tried to get the big farmers to be a leading wedge in their failed attempt to break the dock workers union. Alter said that socialists have to lead in practice on advancing a workers and farmers alliance against their common exploiters, the wealthy capitalist ruling class.

Socialists in Sweden have been participating in the major class battles in Europe, explained Anna Olson from the Communist League in Stockholm, Sweden. Their trips to meet with workers during the Danish general strike in April and May and to workers' mobilizations in Germany helped prepare communists in Sweden for an upturn in the class struggle there. CL members and supporters were better prepared to reach out in a timely way and win public support when rightists broke the window of the Pathfinder bookstore in Stockholm in June. This was the fourth attack on the bookstore in a year, and took place in the context of other rightist attacks on freedom of speech, including the destruction of a controversial photo exhibit.

Picking up on a theme from Barnes's talk, Olson also noted that a former member had recently rejoined the Communist League in Sweden, attracted to the political openings and the communist movement's response.

Paul Pederson, a Young Socialists member who works in the bindery of Pathfinder's print shop, and Bill Estrada, one of the press operators, described some of the steps taken to improve training, habits of collective discipline, control over paper inventories, and machine maintenance. "This has been my most political experience ever," Pederson noted. Working through the challenges of political organization in the shop "convinces

me it's possible for working people to organize society."

Over the two days of discussion, many conference participants took the floor to amplify points made by the panelists and in the talks by Barnes and Poses. This was particularly true the second day.

Laura Garza, a member of the IAM in Houston, spoke about the discussions on the "practice" picket lines by workers at the Anheuser-Busch plant there, who are in the midst of a contract fight. "There is a rumor that after last year's strike at UPS, one of the bosses at Anheuser-Busch said, 'UPS are wimps — we'll show them how to deal with the Teamsters,'" she said. "By going pretty regularly to the plant, we've gotten a feel for some of this discussion."

## Need for discipline grows

As working-class struggles unfold today, "We're learning about the discipline needed to participate in the mass movement," said Norton Sandler, a member of the IAM in San Francisco who organized and chaired the panel discussions. He noted that over the previous 10 days, substantial groups of goons had gone into strawberry fields and attacked union supporters in the Watsonville, California, area.

Both Jacob Perasso and Manuel González described the lesson they learned in organizing protests at the University of California in Santa Cruz against Proposition 227, the California ballot measure banning bilingual education. "The second demonstration took place after Prop. 227 passed," said Perasso "and we ran into right-wing slurs. One driver swerved violently at us, nearly hitting a demonstrator. We organized that protest quickly and without marshals. I'll never organize something like that again without being prepared to defend it."

Alejandra Rincón from Houston spoke from the audience about a protest she had just participated in against a Ku Klux Klan rally in Jasper, Texas, where a Black man, James Byrd Jr., was recently murdered. "This was the first time I'd seen a demonstration of the KKK," she said. About two dozen racists took part in the rally, with about 200 people protesting them. But some people who clearly supported the Klan also gathered to watch. "A Black woman started shouting at them 'Take your hoods off you cowards,'" Rincón said, "and then we started the chant 'Hey hey, ho ho, the KKK has got to go!' It struck me how confident that woman was."

When events like the Jasper lynching happen, being known by your co-workers as a political person pays off. Shelton McCrainey, a member of the USWA in Chicago, described how a fellow worker who is

Chicano came up to him in the break area to point out a news report about James Byrd's funeral. "He was angry and wanted to talk about this, and he asked what I thought. It touched me, because he wasn't even Black." The Chicano worker hadn't bought the *Militant* before, but did after that discussion, and so did a couple of others in the plant.

In his summary to the conference, Barnes described why it was important that the Pittsburgh meeting was called as an active workers conference. He noted that since last October SWP branches and Young Socialists have hosted a number of educational conferences around the country where, among other things, communists came to grips with obstacles they were confronting in responding in a timely and disciplined way to political openings through their branches and union fractions. The Pittsburgh meeting was not a continuation of that series of conferences. We decided we needed an active workers conference now, Barnes explained, to show what we're doing in the mass movement and adjust to more effective ways of doing mass work.

There will be more *Militant* headlines written in kitchens as this continues, he said, recalling the lead article in the paper after a December 1984 fire in the Wilberg coal mine in Utah killed 19 members of the United Mine Workers of America and eight company executives and foremen. Cecelia Moriarity, who worked in the mine, wrote the article together with others. The headline, "Company greed killed coal miners in Utah: Emery Mining Corp. conceals the facts," was the result of discussion among these union fighters in the home of one of them.

## Trade union fraction leaderships meet

For several hours following the completion of the conference, members of the elected steering committees of the SWP's trade union fractions in the United Steelworkers of America; United Auto Workers; Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; International Association of Machinists; Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union; United Transportation Union; and United Food and Commercial Workers union met. Also participating were members of the SWP Coal Committee.

They heard a report by Jack Barnes and discussed their priorities and responsibilities in leading the SWP's fractions in the industrial unions. Summarizing the discussion, Barnes said that the leaderships of steering committees need to focus on initiating timely *policy* guidelines that can be used to competently lead every local unit of the fraction to find and participate in the real lines of resistance to the employers that are

developing in that particular union. Barnes noted that this is not how fraction steering committees have been functioning. They had instead focused on analyzing developments in the union and intervening from afar in the work of local fractions. Hands-on help to local fractions, where appropriate, is best handled by local branch leaderships of the SWP, he said.

Barnes pointed to the importance of timing, which is everything in politics. Coming out of the SWP convention a year ago, the party's branches, fractions, and leadership bodies initially found it difficult to respond rapidly to the openings socialist workers had talked about in the convention sessions. The experiences discussed at the active workers conference showed that we're becoming a movement that can regain the timing that was lost in the retreat, he said. Party members can begin *to act* and then meet in order to keep doing so more effectively. The starting point for the industrial fractions should never be "are you meeting regularly," but "what are you doing." If you are doing something, you'll feel the need to meet, but you will also know what you are meeting about, he emphasized.

Barnes said the structures of the SWP should be coming together politically now. Branch executive committees need to work more closely with local trade union fractions on day-to-day work — they are the most competent to do so. The national trade union fraction steering committees can focus on policy questions and political opportunities in the unions today. Letters to trade union fractions on political openings, such as the GM strike or the telephone workers fight in Puerto Rico, will simultaneously be useful to the political work of party branches, he said.

The Socialist Workers Party National Committee met for two days following the conclusion of the Pittsburgh active workers conference. The NC meeting had been prepared by the conference discussion and by the meeting of the trade union steering committees. Participants continued discussion on the main political points that had come up over the weekend. In his report to the NC meeting, Barnes proposed that all the national trade union fractions call rapid meetings that can draw on the Active Workers Conference to discuss the accelerating labor resistance and elect new fraction leaderships.

All seven industrial union fractions will meet on the August 1–2 weekend. The meetings are being held in Newark, Cleveland, and Chicago.

*Norton Sandler is a member of the International Association of Machinists.*

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# Rail workers, youth snap up socialist press

Continued from back page

Saturn plant. We took the issue of the *Militant* that contained the article reporting on the UAW members authorizing a strike vote. Many people were very interested in this article and the coverage of the GM strike in Michigan. We talked to workers and farmers around the area and sold nine copies of the *Militant* at a grocery store in Spring Hill near the UAW hall.

At the Saturn gate we sold eight *Militants* before being chased off by the security guards. We later went to a Saturn worker's home who *Militant* supporters met the previous week. We talked to her for a couple of hours and she bought a six-month sub to the socialist newsweekly. "That way I'll get it every week and I can take it in to work and show other people," she said.

—Rich Stuart

GUÁNICA, Puerto Rico — "We as a people need a change," said Benjamin Santos, who joined tens of thousands of people in the march here to protest the 100th anniversary of the invasion of Puerto Rico by the United States. The march ended with a rally on the *malecón* or water front promenade, where U.S. troops under the command of General Nelson Miles came ashore a century ago. The banner above the stage read "Latin America united for the independence of Puerto Rico."

Santos, an *independentista* and a member of the Electrical and Irrigation Industry Workers Union, bought a copy of *Perspectiva Mundial*. He had participated in the recent general strike of half a million workers on the island. Santos explained that the strike showed the strength of the union movement and the support from the people. It was a "movement of the people not just the independentistas," said Santos.

Participants at the march purchased 43 copies of *Perspectiva Mundial*, four copies of the *Militant*, eight *PM* subscriptions, three copies of *New International*, and 29 Pathfinder books and pamphlets. The demonstrators bought 14 titles about the Cuban revolution, including three copies of *Junto a Che Guevara* (At the side of Che Guevara) by Cuban revolutionary Harry Villegas

(Pombo) and two copies of *Caminos del Che* about Ernesto Che Guevara in Africa.

—Ron Richards

ST. LOUIS — A team of *Militant* supporters from Chicago and Des Moines returned to St. Louis July 20 to discuss politics with workers at the Anheuser-Busch brewery here. Eight thousand members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) at 12 Anheuser-Busch breweries across the United States are engaged in a contract fight focusing on the protection of seniority rights in job selection, opposition to mandatory overtime, and other issues. The unionists are awaiting the results of a second round of voting on a contract proposal virtually identical to a pact overwhelmingly rejected by workers in April.

"They want to get rid of all the full-time workers they can and replace them with part time, the same as at UPS," said Don Schoenberger, a bottler with 21 years at the brewery. Mike Juenger, like most workers who stopped, is angry that contract talks have dragged on since the March 1 expiration of the last contract. "If we had hit them with a strike in March this would be all over now. But our union hierarchy said to back off, so we don't make Busch mad," he explained. "But look at what Busch is doing to us!"

Fifty-three workers bought copies of the *Militant* over the two-hour sale at the plant gate. One worker asked what he could read to understand why Anheuser-Busch, like other corporations, is driving to break unions. After some discussion, he bought a copy of *New International* no. 10, with the article "Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War."

—Ray Parsons

## Socialist Workers campaign in Seattle



Militant/Robert Bruneau

Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Senate Nan Bailey (center) and YS member Kate Porter campaigning at Juneteenth celebration in Seattle, Washington.

### BY ESTELLE DEBATES

Over the last month, supporters of the Socialist Workers Washington State 1998 campaign have gathered more than 5,000 signatures on petitions to get socialist candidates on the ballot. The slate is headed by Nan Bailey for U.S. Senate. Bailey is an aerospace worker and a member of the International Association of Machinists (IAM). Jeff Powers, a railworker and member of the United Transportation Union, is running for U.S. Congress; and Scott Breen, an IAM member at Boeing, is campaigning in the 37th District for State Congress.

Bailey has participated in a counter-demonstration march against the Aryan Nations July 18 in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

The campaign also issued a statement denouncing the actions of Seattle police June 18-19, who prevent youth, many of whom are Black, from attending a festival in the downtown area. "Just who the Seattle Police Department 'serve and protect' was clearly demonstrated over the weekend — the property and the interest of the rich" read the Socialist Workers campaign statement. "In the process, they run roughshod over the rights of the working class." The statement called on "all working people and defenders of democratic rights" to "condemn the actions of the Seattle cops."

Petitions for the Socialist Workers candidate in Washington state will be presented to election officials on July 30.

# GM postpones showdown with UAW

Continued from front page

659 as he left the hastily called meeting of his local union July 29. Strikers received the four-page summary of the agreement as they entered the meeting and were asked to vote on it before they left. Richardson, a repairman in the welding department with 33 years seniority at the Metal Fabrication Center, continued,

"I'm at retirement age, but it's beneficial for the guys coming after me. It is the best agreement in a long time, if the company lives up to it."

Across town at the meeting of Local 651, with 5,800 members, union members had sharply differing views on the outcome. "I'm happy to be going back to work. The strike was a real hardship," said David Finch, a worker with 20 years at GM. He pointed out, "Now we have 14 more months to prepare," referring to when the national agreement between the union and the company expires.

Dave Elkins, a job setter with 26 years at the car maker, argued, "Nothing's settled. We're basically making the company stand by the last contract!"

The agreement was announced at a press conference in the late afternoon. It was reached after four days of intense negotiations and after GM returned 18 flat-bed truckloads of die parts that the auto giant had secretly removed over the Memorial Day weekend shutdown. It includes promises by GM to complete the originally planned \$300 million investment in new equipment for the Metal Center.

The bosses also agreed to withdraw their federal lawsuit against the union, and their grievance charging that the strikes were illegal under the national union contract. The issue of the strikes' legality had just completed four days of hearings before a mediator. Under the contract signed between the union and company in 1996, UAW members can only strike over local issues such as safety, production standards, and outsourcing.

The union pointed to local issues as the cause of the strikes, while the bosses claimed that their investment policy was the real reason for the walkouts. The company had hoped to block future strike action by the union.

The bosses promised not to sell the Delphi East plant or two Delphi brake plants in Dayton, Ohio, before January 1, 2000. The company will also pay 70,000 laid off or striking workers in the United States the five days of holiday pay lost over the first week of the shutdown in early July. This \$44.8 million will come from joint training funds to which the UAW and GM contribute. The union leaders and the bosses announced that they would work out new ways of communicating to avoid strikes in the future.

The UAW officials agreed to settle outstanding issues that have led to strike authorization votes at the two Dayton factories as well as at the Buick City Complex across town in Flint and at a Metal Fabrication Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. The officials agreed to a no-strike pledge in Dayton for the duration of the present labor contract, but not at Buick City and Indianapolis. The agreement does not settle issues that have led to strike authorization votes at the auto maker's Saturn assembly factory in Spring Hills, Tennessee, its sport utility plant in Janesville, Wisconsin, and its Bowling Green, Kentucky, Corvette factory. The last plant is the only location in GM's U.S. operations without a local contract.

The agreement at the Metal Fabrication Center includes some productivity concessions by the union. In return for the promised investment, workers in the welding department are required, under threat of unspecified penalties, to increase production by about 15 percent by March 1, 1999. Many workers leaving the meeting didn't see this as a major increase. Tim, a welder in the plant for the last three years who asked that his last name not be used, pointed out, "These are the same numbers we told them [plant management] we could give them in January." The company attacked the union during the strike for upholding so-called pegged rates, which allow a worker to weld a set number of parts per shift, and then stop. The auto giant agreed that this system would stay in place, but with the increased production numbers.

Aza Hinkle, a quality technician with 25 years at the Metal Center who spent almost

eight years welding, said GM "wanted the welders to work like they use to force us to work, 55 minutes out of every hour. But the work is strenuous and hot. The welders will be able to get the new rate, but the company will want to raise the rate again." One thing the strike proves, she said, was that "the young people coming in will not tolerate being treated like we were."

As part of settling outstanding grievances Brian Lehr, a fork lift operator, said, "I get a \$.13 an hour raise." Lehr came to the union meeting carrying his picket sign. "I brought this along because I've gotten used to it and if we hadn't gotten what we wanted I could have carried it a little longer," he explained.

The work stoppages, which began in early June, had led to the auto giant shutting down much of its widespread North American assembly and parts operation. At its height, the bosses had laid off 193,000 GM workers in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, blaming the strikers. Some analysts put the cost of the shutdown to the auto barons at \$2.2 billion and the production of 567,000 vehicles. Ward's Automotive Reports, an industry newsletter, estimates that non-GM auto parts suppliers have lost between \$220 million and \$1.1 billion. It could take a week or more for the company to get all its assembly plants back into production, even though it was running radio announcements for workers at some factories in the Detroit area to report to work before the votes were counted in Flint.

Initial reactions from Wall Street were unfavorable to the agreement. Capitalist investors had hoped that GM could defeat the workers and drive through with its plan to slash 50,000 jobs and increase productivity levels to those of its main competitors.

Workers also understand that the almost eight weeks on the picket line settled little. "It's a little hard to be too excited," explained Kendall Martin, a Metal Center worker with 27 years seniority. "I don't think I'll relax until next year, when we've got a national agreement." He captured a widely held opinion "We're going to have to be back out here, and next time GM is going to be more prepared."

Jean Luc Duval is a member of UAW Local 235 and John Sarge is a member of UAW Local 900, in the Detroit area. Holly Harkness contributed to this article.

RENEWAL DRIVE JULY 8 – AUGUST 4					
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
Iceland	3	5	167%		
Australia	3	4	133%	1	0
Canada					
Montreal	4	3	75%	3	0
Vancouver	12	4	33%	1	0
Toronto	9	2	22%	1	0
Canada Total	25	9	36%	5	0
United States					
Washington, D.C.	9	9	100%	3	0
Miami	10	6	60%	5	0
Atlanta	7	4	57%	3	1
Des Moines	8	4	50%	4	0
Detroit	10	5	50%	2	0
Boston	14	6	43%	3	0
Cleveland	8	3	38%	2	0
Chicago	14	5	36%	6	1
Houston	8	2	25%	2	0
San Francisco	17	4	24%	7	0
Pittsburgh	10	2	20%	1	0
Seattle	13	2	15%	3	0
Twin Cities, MN	13	2	15%	2	0
Los Angeles	20	3	15%	8	0
Newark, NJ	20	3	15%	8	3
Philadelphia	8	1	13%	1	0
Birmingham, AL	10	1	10%	2	0
New York	30	3	10%	15	1
U.S. Total	229	65	28%	77	6
New Zealand					
Christchurch	6	2	33%		
Auckland	6	1	17%		
N.Z. Total	12	3	25%	0	0
Sweden	4	1	25%	1	1
United Kingdom					
London	10	1	10%	2	0
Manchester	3	0	0%	0	0
UK Total	13	1	8%	2	0
Other		3			
International totals	289	91	33%	86	7
Goal/Should be at	275	206	75%	85	64

## Farm workers protest 'union' vote for pro-company outfit in California fields

BY ELLEN SMITH

WATSONVILLE, California — About 750 farm workers walked off the job here July 24. Workers blocked gates and prevented trucks from picking up loads of strawberries for delivery at several of Coastal Berry's largest ranches.

The one-day walkout was organized to protest the results of what the United Farm Workers (UFW) is calling a sham election, in which the "Coastal Berry Workers Committee," won the right to represent workers by a vote of 523-410.

The "Coastal Berry Workers Committee" is an antiunion outfit, backed by the growers, whose primary purpose is to prevent the United Farm Workers from organizing the workers at Coastal Berry.

By July 27 most of the workers were back in the fields. However, several farm workers at the UFW union hall early that morning told *Militant* reporters that some UFW supporters hadn't been allowed by the bosses to return to work.

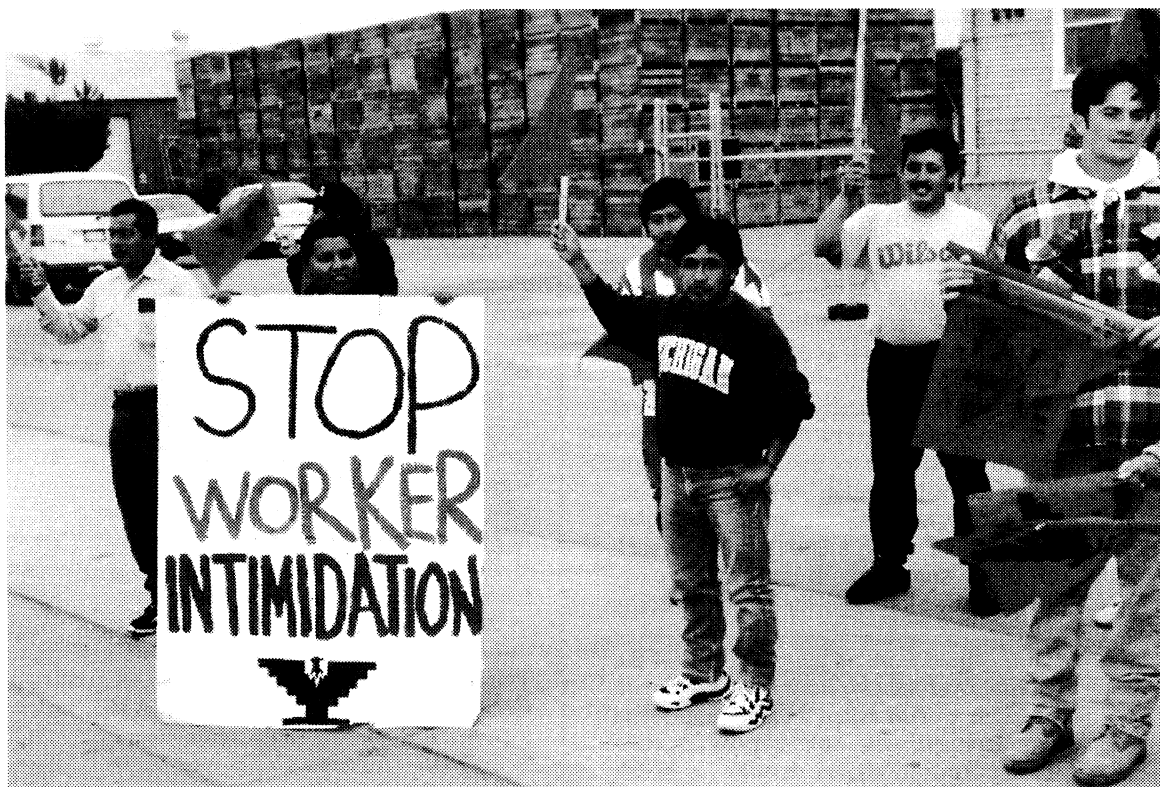
One young strawberry picker, who asked that his name not be used, said the reason the phony "union" won was because so many workers were intimidated by the bosses, and that the employers were using the election as a way to divide the workers. "We will win!" he insisted.

According to UFW president Arturo Rodriguez, "It was the workers that initiated the strike, and they're the ones that are angry and upset.... The workers came to us and said, 'That's it. We've had enough.'"

Coastal Berry is the central coast's largest strawberry grower, producing 15 percent of the strawberries consumed nationally. About 1,500 of the state's 20,000 strawberry workers are employed by this company during the peak season, making this grower a major target of the UFW's organizing drive in the fields.

The UFW declined to be on the ballot, calling the election a sham. Several hundred farm workers and supporters demonstrated outside the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) in Salinas July 22 to protest the holding of the election.

Strawberry workers testified to the intimidation and violence used against them to convince them to sign the petition. "This



Supporters of the United Farm Workers protest the July 1 attack by about 150 goons who support the "Coastal Berry Workers Committee," a pro-company outfit that recently intimidated strawberry workers into holding a representation vote in Watsonville, California.

election is based on violence, intimidation, and lies," said Rosalinda Guillén during the rally.

After the ALRB decided that the election

could take place, the protests resumed the next day during the counting of the ballots.

The union is challenging the election, charging that an atmosphere of violence and

intimidation initiated by the company made a free and fair election impossible. About 150 supporters of the pro-company outfit attacked pro-union workers in the fields July 1. Several workers were injured.

According to union officials, company representatives threatened to fire workers who didn't sign election petitions. The UFW is also filing charges with the ALRB over irregularities in the voting process. UFW organizer Alma Hernández said that the ALRB "is giving more legitimacy to the sham union than they have to the years-long struggle of the UFW."

If the ALRB certifies the election, the UFW will challenge the certification by alleging that the "Coastal Berry Workers Committee" is not a union.

The Committee has put forward no proposals other than a desire to keep out the UFW.

As José Fernández, one of the organizers of this committee, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "I guess we could ask for more money or bonuses or something."

If the election stands and a contract is negotiated between the grower and this company union, the UFW would be prevented from representing the workforce for at least one year or the duration of the terms of the contract.

## Rail workers renew 'Militant' subscriptions for coverage of Cuba and labor struggles

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

"One of my co-workers renewed her subscription to the *Militant* because she liked its distinctive coverage of the Cuban revolution," said Amtrak worker Tom Headley from Washington, D.C. "Other co-workers who renewed their subscriptions were interested in the labor coverage, including the GM strike. They pointed to the audacity of GM to move the dies out of the plant after the workers had walked off the job. One *Militant* headline, '19,000 United Airlines workers join union,' caught many people's

attention."

Headley said five co-workers renewed their *Militant* subscriptions and one renewed his sub to *Perspectiva Mundial*. "I expect there will be a couple more *Militant* renewals," he added.

Headley is a member of the United Transportation Union and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers who recently won his job back after being fired. He spent his first days back on the job looking up co-workers who had been part of the fight to have him reinstated. "Many people wanted to talk about the fight to get my job back and in the course of political discussions they renewed their subscriptions."

Headley's experience on the job points to the opportunities to increase the subscription base of the *Militant* among fellow unionists and workers involved in labor battles. With one week remaining in the campaign to expand the long-term readership of the socialist press, supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* face a challenge to sell 184 *Militant* renewals and 78 *PM* renewals. During the third week of the drive, 68 readers renewed their *Militant* subscriptions, including 10 who purchased one-year subs. One person in North Miami Beach, Florida, who bought a 12-week trial subscription in April, mailed in a one-year renewal, paid for a copy of the Marxist magazine *New International* no. 7, and requested information about bound volumes of the *Militant*.

Sigurlaug Gunnlaugshóttir from Iceland reports that supporters of the socialist press there sold five renewals to the *Militant*, going over their goal by 67 percent. "We went through the list of all our previous subscribers, some whose subscrip-

tions expired a year ago," she said.

"I'm still catching up after the bus trip for the July 25 action," wrote Ernie Mailhot from Miami. "*Militant* supporter Kay Sedam and I hardly slept since we were in constant discussions with several young people, including the head of the Puerto Rican student association at the University of Florida in Gainesville and members of the Orlando Committee to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War."

One of the people we talked to quite a bit was Amílcar Segarra, the son of Juan Segarra, who is one of the 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners held in U.S. jails. One of the members of the committee agreed to renew his *Militant* sub and we also sold four trial subscriptions to the *Militant* and five *PM* subs."

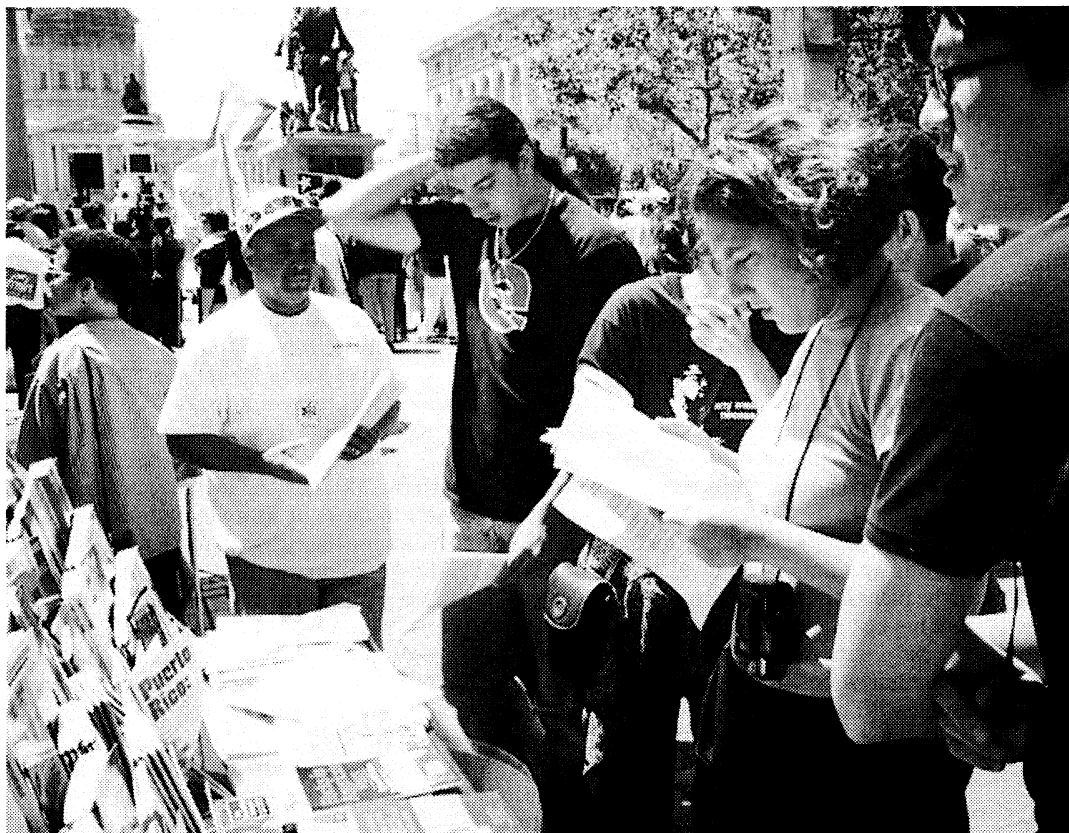
Below are several notes sent into the *Militant* Business Office reporting on the renewal campaign and recent sales of the socialist press. All renewals received by noon on August 4 will count toward the international goal.

ATLANTA — Supporters of the socialist press here have been systematically calling the list of those whose subscriptions to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* have expired. When Benigno Arellano Pinson received a call recently to renew his *PM* subscription, he enthusiastically said yes and arranged for a visit. Mike Italie, a *Militant* supporter here, met with Arellano who renewed his sub for one year and also purchased the Spanish version of *The Bolivian Diary* of Che Guevara. He told Italie, "I'd like to see more coverage on Mexico in *Perspectiva Mundial*."

— Dan Fein

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama — I was part of a team from Birmingham that traveled to Spring Hill, Tennessee, July 25 to follow up on a visit by a *Militant* sales team to GM's

Continued on Page 7



Participants at Puerto Rican independence demonstration in San Francisco July 25 snap up the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books.